



News Release

STATE OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Serving Time With a "Purpose"

Md. Prison System to Begin "Purpose-Driven Life"

Volunteer teachers, donated materials, no cost to taxpayers

TOWSON, MD (August 8, 2004)—Maryland's Division of Correction is poised to become the first correctional system in the nation to adopt widespread usage of the popular "Purpose-Driven Life." The non-denominational Christian personal growth program is based on the book of the same name which has sold more than 10-million copies and been wildly popular nationwide. "The Purpose-Driven Life" is a chapter-a-day program lasting 40 days. It has drawn rave reviews from a California prison, which was the first in the nation to offer it. In the year after that prison began "The Purpose Driven Life," its violent incidents declined by nearly 40%.

Unlike California's largely inmate-run self-help effort, Maryland's program will be highly structured, with prison chaplains helping volunteer instructors adhering to a closely followed curriculum. Inmates are not required to participate, but are invited to attend of their own accord. Churches and private citizens will donate all supplies.

The Purpose-Driven Life program will begin at the Maryland Correctional Training Center near Hagerstown, then expand to the Eastern Pre-Release Unit and the Eastern Correctional Institution on the Eastern Shore, the Maryland Correctional Institution-Hagerstown, and Western Correctional Institution near Cumberland.

Maryland's Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services is developing RESTART, a philosophical shift adding many more services, treatment programs, and educational components for inmates, 98% of whom will one day return to society. "Offering inmates spiritual services has always been very important," says DPSCS Secretary Mary Ann Saar. "This Purpose-Driven Life program fits right in with our effort to give inmates a chance to leave better-prepared for their life after incarceration."

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Providing New Paths to Public Safety